Thank you! Central New York’s premier AIDS event, ACR Health’s AIDS Walk/Run, celebrated 25 years of successful fundraising with a rally and an inspiring trek through scenic trails of Beaver Lake Nature Center, and raised $141,518 (and counting) despite a steady rain.

The first AIDS Walk/Run was in 1993 during AIDS’ darkest days. That year, 14,646 New Yorkers would learn that they had AIDS. Today, due to New York’s aggressive blueprint to End AIDS, we can now report a 79% decrease in new HIV cases in New York over the past 25 years. Money raised at the AIDS Walk/Run, now $2.89 million and counting, has contributed to that success, as it has always been invested in youth prevention education programming; emergency client needs; and used to raise awareness about HIV prevention and the need to be tested.

The Director of the AIDS Institute, New York State Department of Health, Johanne E. Morne, arrived from Albany to help celebrate the day. “It was an honor to join so many members of the community for the 25th Annual AIDS Walk/Run. The rain could not dampen the spirit of family and friends coming together to honor those who have passed, raise money to fund essential services for those living with HIV/AIDS, and ultimately be part of the plan to end the epidemic both in your region and across the state by the end of 2020. Thank you for all you do!”

Three individuals who created and sustained the AIDS Walk/Run for the past 25 years - Executive Director, Wil Murtaugh, Director of Volunteers Services, Mary Doody, and volunteer Mike Kyle-Ducharme received awards honoring 25 years of dedicated service.

“I am humbled by the knowledge of all the favorable, life-changing consequences the AIDS Walk/Run has brought to Central New York. I anticipate the day, not too far off now, when we can declare the End of the AIDS Epidemic in New York,” said Wil Murtaugh, Executive Director of ACR Health, who founded the AIDS Walk/Run. “As a recruiter of volunteers for ACR Health events, I honor the hard work of those who have passed as well as those who continue to educate, advocate and spread awareness until there is an end to the epidemic,” said Mary Doody.
Looking back to 1993 when it all started, I am amazed that the AIDS Walk/Run has grown so big and accomplished so much. While we were waiting for a cure, we were desperate to do something – anything – to combat AIDS; to wipe out its awful stigma; to promote HIV testing; to convince people that the human beings suffering and dying from AIDS were not bad people to be shunned and feared.

At AIDS Task Force of CNY (now ACR Health) volunteers transported individuals to doctors’ appointments and grocery stores because they were too sick to take care of themselves and had been abandoned by their families because they had AIDS.

While there was no surefire treatment for AIDS, there was a way to prevent it: education, awareness, and condoms. ACR Health used the proceeds from the first AIDS Walk/Run ($31,259) to set up Teen AIDS Task Force chapters in schools and to establish HIV prevention programs for youth and adults.

As we observe 25 years of prevention education made possible by the AIDS Walk/Run, it is important to note that New York is now unbelievably just three years away from realizing its goal of “Ending the AIDS Epidemic by 2020.” Ending the Epidemic means bringing new HIV infections below 750 per year. State Health officials say we are on target to meet this incredible goal. To be successful, we must find those who are unaware that they are HIV positive and thereby unknowingly infecting their partners. Only HIV testing can find them.

ACR Health has greatly expanded HIV testing, which is up 545% in 2017 compared to 2012.

If state funding stays strong and HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns get the attention they need to be successful, HIV/AIDS will be brought under control. It’s hard to even imagine what this might mean. After the dark days of the 1980’s and 1990’s, we might just contain this disease that claimed so many lives and causes heartbreak even to this day.

These are exciting times for ACR Health. I was a volunteer in 1993 when I gathered a group of other volunteers and created the AIDS Walk/Run. That event has had two main purposes for the past 25 years: raise money to support youth prevention education programming and support emergency client needs. While we are still waiting for that elusive cure, we are making progress in the fight to contain AIDS. We will stay focused on winning the fight until it’s over and there is a cure.

If you would like to help save a life, visit ACRHealth.org for more information. For every $100 raised we can:

• $10 trains 10 people how to use Narcan - the over-dose rescue drug
• $18 helps supply an HIV test kit
• $39 provides one year’s worth of ARVs

Together we can reach our goal of $150,000.

Help us further the impact of the AIDS Walk/Run and enclosed envelope to give.

Wil Murtaugh
Executive Director
Help us further the impact of the AIDS Walk/Run and reach our goal of $150,000.

- $18 helps supply an HIV test kit
- $70 trains 10 people how to use Narcan - the overdose rescue drug

You can help save a life. To donate, go online ACRHealth.org or use the enclosed envelope to give.

THANK YOU

The 25th Annual AIDS Walk/Run would not have been possible without the following sponsors:

- Principal Sponsors: Empower Federal Credit Union and Gilead Sciences;
- Supporting Sponsors: Aloft Hotel Inner Harbor; Century Cooling & Heating, DJ Puff Advisors Group, Noble Health Services, PharmBlue and World of Beer;
- Media Sponsors: FOX 68 WSYT, and HOT 107.9;
- In Kind Sponsors: Lamar Advertising
- Special thanks to Beaver Lake Nature Center.
ACR Health has just been notified that it has received funding to establish a Drug User Health Hub, further expanding its existing services for drug users. The initial grant is for $250,000 for a ten-month period ending in April 2018.

Services will include Medication Assisted Treatment, accessible buprenorphine prescribing; opioid overdose prevention and/or aftercare and safety planning for individuals who have experienced overdose; linkage and navigation for substance use treatment; and cultural competency campaigns and training for others providers to ensure medical, mental health, substance use or other services are available and appropriate for people who use drugs.

The services that we deliver with the new funding will not change, but rather, be enhanced. “Right now we are over capacity for the amount of individuals we can see. We are booking two weeks out for most services,” said Alexandra Punch, Director of Drug User Health. “The Hub money will allow us to better serve our clients by adding more staff to the roster. We will also be able to have dedicated staff do Naloxone training and outreach, a service desperately needed to help save lives.”

The Safety First Medical Clinic opened a year ago and has seen a steady increase in the number of people using its services. At the start, only a handful of injection drug users were seen on a daily basis for medical treatments like wound care for abscesses at injection site. That changed significantly when Dr. Laura Martin started offering Suboxone to help individuals who were going through withdrawal.

Many clients are presenting to the clinic for a bridge prescription, which means they are on a waitlist to enter outpatient or inpatient services that will provide Suboxone once engaged, but need to be placed on Suboxone until they enter treatment. Most of these clients are with the bridge program for no more than four weeks. The clinic also provides Suboxone maintenance for clients who are not engaged in or seeking treatment, but want to stop using. Recently, Dr. Martin prescribed 65 clients with Suboxone in one month.

Since January, 200 new clients have received clinic services. Of those, 121 are presently using or have used injection drugs within the past six months. The remaining 79 are undergoing treatment for addiction and receive Suboxone or other medical assistance through the Safety First Medical Clinic.

The new funding, allocated from NYS Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services, is in addition to existing funding for ACR Health’s Syringe Exchange Programs (SEP) and Safety First Medical Clinic. The funding will allow the clinic hours to expand operations to four and a half days per week.
needed to help save lives.”

For more than 100 years, death rates have been dropping for Americans — but now, because of opioids, death rates are rising again. We as a nation are going backward, and drug overdoses are now the leading cause of death for Americans under 50.

Yet our efforts to address this scourge are pathetic.

Nicholas Kristof
New York Times op-ed
June 22, 2017

reaction. When this test for consciousness failed the three knew exactly what they had to do next: get Narcan into his system fast. She drove the thick syringe into his quad muscle and watched for a sign of improvement. Nothing. Hands shaking, but thoughts focused, she pushed another shot home. Still nothing. Hillary then assembled a third dose, this one a nasal spray, and swiftly administered that. This time the young man began to come around, just as an ambulance arrived on the scene.

What seemed like an eternity to those watching was over in a matter of minutes. The young man was alive, in the hands of medical professionals, and the crisis was over.

“It all happened so fast,” said Hillary, “but I’m thankful for all the training I have done over and over and over, otherwise I would not have been as confident.”

Justin called the incident “a real team effort, if someone was nearby they were putting together the naloxone injection or the nasal pieces.”

“It was nerve-wracking but we knew the signs of an overdose and were aware of our surroundings,” said Amanda. “I’m just glad he’s okay.”

The parking lot overdose reversal is one of many that our staff and those we love with potentially lifesaving tools.

Hillary Warner, Justin Snell, and Amanda Stenson worked together to prevent an overdose from becoming fatal.

ACR Health offers free Narcan training every other week in Syracuse and every month in Watertown and Utica. Call 800.475.2430 or email Narcan@ACRHealth.org. The training could make the difference between life and death.
The much coveted Q Center Pink Sneaker Award was presented to four individuals and one corporation, BNY Mellon, for outstanding commitment to Equality and Inclusion. Winners are:

Frank Lazarski: Seeing a need for a permanent safe space for LGBTQ youth, Frank’s leadership guided United Way to provide initial significant funding for the Q Center. The Q would not be here without him. We would like to thank Frank for his bravery and forethought. His work has not only been life-changing for youth, but has made our community a more progressive place to raise all families.

Cody Gilkeson: As captain of BNY Mellon’s AIDS Walk/Run Team, Cody doubled his team’s donations and spearheaded the Holiday Angel program, which gifted more than 250 youth. “I am so incredibly blessed to say that thanks to my wonderful company, I am enabled to work with ACR Health to ensure that not only the youth in my family, but NO LGBTQ youth has to go without support.”

Andrew Brazill: At FOX 68 Andrew used his position as Program & Creative Director to empower the Q Center through videos that allow youth to speak for themselves. ACR Health is honored to be a small part of the view out of his creative window. “I don’t know if my one-year-old son will ever need a place like the Q center but I am so glad it’s there in case he does. Thank you for counting me as an Ally.”

Assembly Member Al Stirpe: Learning about the challenges faced by LGBTQ youth, Assemblyman Al Stirpe secured $20,000 of funding for the Q Center to provide mental health services, as well as a family peer advocate for parent caregivers of transgender children. A assemblyman Stirpe impacts lives. His progressive work will let all youth know they are valued, keep children healthy and families successfully together.

*The Pink Sneaker award is inspired by blogger Todd Panek. The first sentence of his blog reads: ‘My boy likes dolls.’ You can read more of Todd’s blog at https://tmpinsyr.com/2012/03/20/ok-dad-live-your-convictions.*
Four Promoted to Management Positions

**Kelly St. Clair** has accepted the newly created position of **Director of Quality Assurance** where she will develop and implement policies to improve accountability and quality service delivery in programs agency-wide.

“This position is a great opportunity to ensure that all the wonderful work ACR Health does in our communities is done with the highest standards,” said Ms. St. Clair. “I look forward to working across all programs to establish successful measures that show our continued commitment to quality service delivery.”

Prior to coming to ACR Health in 2015, Ms. St. Clair provided oversight and technical assistance to five to Environmental Protection Agency NYSDOH to New York State Department of Health.

**Prevention Department Re-organization**

Growth in ACR Health’s Prevention Department, which now offers services through ten separate state grants, has prompted the division of oversight to three directors, each covering a critical area of prevention programming.

**Alexandra Punch** has become ACR Health’s first **Director of Drug User Health** with responsibility to manage operation of the Safety First Medical Clinic, Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services, and Substance Outreach, to help substance users reduce risks and enter treatment when ready. Ms. Punch ensures that programs are responsive to the needs of the community.

“The opioid crisis is multi-faceted. It’s important that we recognize and treat the entire individual, not just one aspect of their life,” said Ms. Punch. “ACR Health’s Department of Drug User Health aims to meet individuals “where they are” and help them navigate the sometimes confusing and daunting road of treatment and/or recovery.”

Ms. Punch has a Masters of Public Administration from Northeastern University and a Bachelor of Science from SUNY ESF. Before working at ACR Health she was at Onondaga County’s Health Department as a Research Tech II in the Bureau of Disease Control.

**Julia LaVere** was named the **Director of Syringe Exchange Programs**. Ms. LaVere oversees syringe exchange efforts and Narcan (naloxone) Trainings throughout ACR Health’s nine-county service area. She is responsible for the fixed syringe exchange sites in Syracuse and Utica (with a Watertown location to be added soon), a mobile fixed site unit, a voucher program in Utica, and “backpack peers” across ACR Health’s nine-county service area.

“I firmly believe in the ACR Health value of respect for people and community. We are not here to judge – we are here to promote public health; to prevent the spread of HIV and Hepatitis C through use of clean and sterile syringes,” said Ms. LaVere.

Ms. LaVere has a Masters Degree in Social Work, and was previously ACR Health’s Community Prevention Coordinator for the North Country.

**John Arcaro** has become the **Director of Prevention - Community Initiatives**. As such, he is in charge of ACR Health’s targeted programs to End the AIDS Epidemic by 2020. He supervises all counseling and testing programs: HIV, sexually transmitted infections, and Hepatitis C. He coordinates ACR Health’s Criminal Justice Initiative which provides comprehensive HIV, STD, and Hepatitis prevention programs for inmates and develops individual transitional plans for health care, risk reduction, and services for inmates upon release from prison.

He manages peer programs for trained volunteers to create and maintain inroads with our priority populations by working on the Safety First Outreach vans.

“Establishing trust with those we serve is essential. Our peer volunteers, people who come from the communities we prioritize for our services, are very good conduits for our message of health and safety,” said Mr. Arcaro. “Peers work alongside our employees out of the Safety First mobile units and connect with people who would benefit from our services.”

Mr. Arcaro did his under graduate work at Le Moyne College and has a Masters Degree from Syracuse University.
ACR Health offers its services to anyone without discrimination based on age, race, creed, color, gender, sexual orientation, economic status, political affiliation, marital status, handicapped status, or mode of transmission.

ACR Health is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Follow us on:

Supported by:

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**August 2, 2018**  
Sign Up Party for Bike n Brew  
5:30-8:30 p.m. at Spokes Craft Beer and Tapas, 18 Public Square, Watertown. Sign up for Bike n Brew, 30 mile bike ride from Spokes Brewery in Watertown to Hop Spot Brewery in Sackets Harbor and back.

**August 18, 2017 – Friday**  
Syracuse City Wide Clean-up  
Team Up to Clean Up. ACR Health in partnership with Syracuse University College of Law will help improve our city by cleaning up litter throughout the City of Syracuse.

**August 23 – September 3, 2017**  
The Great Scavenger Hunt  
Participate in the largest scavenger hunt ever at the Great New York State Fair. Complete challenges to accrue points with one grand prize winner announced on the last day of the fair. The person with the most points wins!! Participation includes your ticket entry into the fair. To register visit ACRHealth.org/events

**October 2, 2017 - Monday**  
Upstate-Downstate Party  
Q Center Giving Party at Madonna, 545 8th Avenue, Suite 750, New York, New York. To benefit Q Centers of Central New York, Northern New York, and the Mohawk Valley.

**October 11, 2017 – Wednesday**  
Dining Out for Life  
Put your money where your mouth is with a love bite. Mohawk Valley restaurants will give a portion of your bill to ACR Health. If you are an interested Restaurant or would like to be an Ambassador, please contact Maureen at moneill@acrhealth.org.

**October 15, 2017 - Sunday**  
18th Annual First Frost Walk/Run  
1:00 p.m. Thompson Park Zoo and Conservatory, Watertown. Sign up as an individual or a team. Want to train with a group? Sign up for the Couch to 5K in 5 weeks. To register call Page Fitness 786-8032.

**Q CENTERS FOR LGBTQ YOUTH**  
Resources throughout Central, Northern, and Mohawk Valley regions. For information call 800.475.2430 or email QCenter@ACRHealth.org

**TESTING SERVICES**  
HIV, gonorrhea, chlamydia, syphilis, and Hepatitis C  
Testing@ACRHealth.org

**NARCAN TRAINING**  
Monthly trainings at ACR Health offices. Appointments: Narcan@ACRHealth.org

**SYRINGE EXCHANGES**  
• Syracuse Office, 637 W. Genesee Street, and Outreach Van at corner of Dudley & Fitch Street  
• Utica Office: 287 Genesee Street  
SEP@ACRHealth.org

**HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAMS**  
Health insurance enrollment and advocacy.  
Navigator@ACRHealth.org

**GET INVOLVED. JOIN THE TEAM.**  
Interested in volunteering or interning with ACR Health?  
Volunteer@ACRHealth.org

For information on all programs, call 1.800.475.2430

*This newsletter is printed with soy ink.*